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Activities not classified by field: statistical capacity-building

Statistical capacity-building

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present paper was prepared at the request of the Statistical Commission at its thirty-third session.[a] It contains a brief description of the current work programme of the United Nations Statistics Division in the area of technical cooperation. Points for discussion are contained in paragraph 11.

[a] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2002, Supplement No. 4* (E/2002/24), chap. I, sect. A.

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I. Introduction

1. At its thirty-third session, the Statistical Commission decided to include statistical capacity-building on the agenda of its thirty-fourth session. The Commission has repeatedly endorsed the need for technical cooperation to be demand-oriented and not donor-driven; nationally owned and tailored to local needs; and effectively coordinated between different providers.

2. The present report reviews United Nations Statistics Division technical cooperation activities, which seek to build the statistical capacity of countries and regions. The regional programmes aim to build regional networks and promote cooperation between countries in the respective regions. Particular attention has been given to building capability by transferring technical expertise between countries and promoting common technical standards and methodology.

II. United Nations Statistics Division technical cooperation programme

3. The United Nations Statistics Division recognizes the importance of technical cooperation in statistics for supporting developing countries and countries with economies in transition to build and extend their capacity and services. The Division has continued its support for the formulation and execution of country projects to improve population statistics and for regional projects to develop and strengthen regional statistical capacity. Consultancies and training are the major components of the Division's technical cooperation activities. Training covers fellowships, on-the-job training, study tours, workshops, seminars and local training.[1] In 2002, the Division used three main sources of funding: the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the regular programme for technical cooperation and the United Nations Development Account.

4. The Division continued its partnership with UNFPA, the funding agency for 10 projects (seven country, two regional and one interregional) in the areas of conducting population and housing censuses; data collection; evaluation, analysis and processing of census data; developing community census support; and statistical capacity-building. Three technical experts provided full-time support for project activities at the country level. One inter-country adviser at Headquarters conducted 16 country visits to provide advisory services. Three workshops (two for the Southern African Development Community and one for the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Baltic countries), two study tours and 12 short-term consultancy services were conducted in the above-mentioned different areas for the projects. Three fellowships were provided for training in geographic information systems.

5. The regular programme provided funding for two interregional advisers at Headquarters — one on economic statistics and one on informatics. One workshop on energy statistics (African countries) was conducted. In addition, the programme supported trainees from developing and transition countries for study tours on the subjects of disability measurements; governance of national statistical systems; and standardization of geographical names and toponymy. The programme also financed the attendance of participants from developing and transition countries at a meeting of the International Association for Official Statistics held in London. In addition,

the management and staff of the Division conducted more than 50 country visits to provide advisory services in the above-mentioned subject areas.

6. The Division has three programmes currently in operation under the United Nations Development Account — one for Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member countries, one for Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) member countries and one for Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) member countries. A fourth programme has been recently proposed for member countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The programmes aim to strengthen the regional capacities for statistical development by creating and establishing expert networks. They are developed in close consultation with statistical offices in the respective regions in order to determine the focus of the programmes.

7. The CARICOM programme's statistics component covered three key areas — information technology; environment statistics; and social and gender statistics. In 2002, two regional reports — on environment statistics and on social and gender statistics — were published; study tours were arranged for staff of selected national statistics offices and the CARICOM secretariat; and a meeting of the CARICOM Advisory Group on Social and Environment Statistics was held. As the project draws to a close, the focus of the activities has been to ensure sustainability of the project objectives beyond the project span. To that end, the emphasis has been on supporting the Advisory Group to plan a programme for statistical development in the region; strengthen the capacity of the CARICOM secretariat; and further the national compilation of data on social/gender statistics and environment statistics.

8. In the ASEAN programme, the substantive focus lies in the areas of national and satellite accounting; development indicators; and statistical organization and management. In 2002, the programme provided for four consultancies, and 10 workshops were conducted in the above-mentioned focus areas and in the subject areas of classifications; web site management; and census and surveys. The programme also arranged study tours for staff of selected national statistical offices in the region. In addition, the programme supported the attendance of the heads of statistical offices in the ASEAN region at the Fourth ASEAN Heads of Statistical Offices Meeting held in Yangon, Myanmar, and of the chief statisticians in the region at an International Statistical Institute briefing seminar for chief statisticians held in London.

9. In the ESCWA programme, the substantive focus lies in the areas of statistical organization and management; census management and the harmonization of census methodology; and environment statistics. In 2002, two workshops and a seminar on the above-mentioned focus areas were conducted. The programme also provided three consultancies in those areas.

10. With regard to the proposed ECOWAS programme, the suggested substantive focus would be on statistical infrastructure and operations; social statistics and macroeconomic indicators; and communication and information technology. More detailed agreements will have to be discussed with national statisticians of the region. The overall objective of the programme is to strengthen national statistical systems in the countries of the ECOWAS region in support of the millennium development goals, in particular through the use of improved communication and information technology. The project will also promote cooperation among the countries of the region in the field of statistics.

III. Points for discussion

11. The Commission may wish to comment on United Nations Statistics Division activities in the area of statistical capacity-building and give directions concerning the orientation of the Division's future technical cooperation programme.

Notes

[1] A total of 364 statisticians participated in the Division's various training events from January to October 2002.